

L Press Guidance
Wednesday, October 1, 2008

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Human Rights Watch Report on Horn of Africa Renditions

Q: Does the State Department have any reaction to the Human Rights Watch (HRW) report, released October 1, accusing the United States of complicity in the alleged transfer and mistreatment of individuals in Ethiopia and Kenya?

- We have seen the report, which contains allegations about U.S. intelligence and law enforcement activities. We do not comment on such matters.
- The United States complies with its laws and treaty obligations and respects the sovereignty of other countries; it does not transport individuals from one country to another for the purpose of torture.
- While we cannot address the specifics of the HRW report, we can confirm that the United States continues to seek to counter the real threat posed by Al Qaeda and associated groups in the Horn of Africa.

Background:

Human Rights Watch today released a report entitled "Why Am I Still Here? The 2007 Horn of Africa Renditions and the Fate of Those Still Missing." The report describes Kenyan arrests of at least 150 people who were fleeing the Ethiopian intervention in Somalia in late 2006. It goes on to characterize as a "rendition" Kenya's return of many of these people to Somalia, where they were allegedly turned over to Ethiopian authorities. The report further describes their subsequent detention by Ethiopian authorities, including allegations of mistreatment by Ethiopian authorities, and allegations that several of them were extensively questioned by U.S. officials. The report contains a number of recommendations for the United States, including that we disclose information about our involvement in these "renditions," that we repudiate the use of rendition, that we withhold funding from Ethiopia and Kenya until they disclose additional information about these detentions, and that we either prosecute in civilian court or release Mohammed Abdulmalik, who is currently detained in Guantanamo after initially being arrested by Kenyan authorities.

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Drafted: L/PM: THeinemann

Cleared:

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